

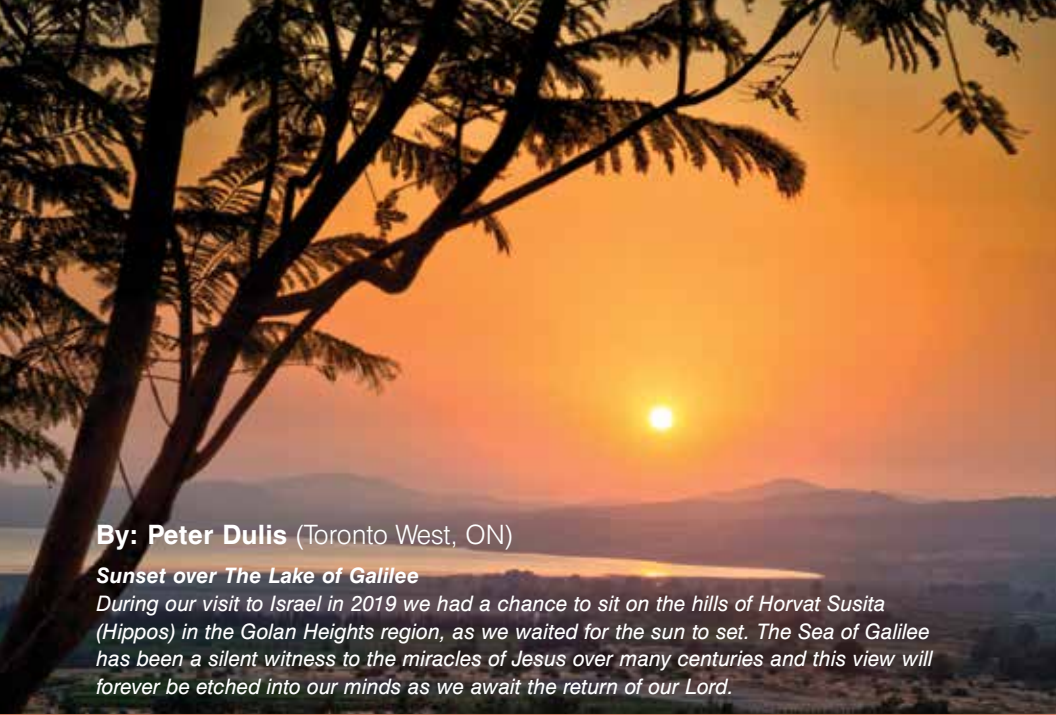
TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 3, March 2021

WINGS LIKE A DOVE

It is only when we turn our pain and conflict over
to our Lord that we can begin to feel relief.





By: Peter Dulis (Toronto West, ON)

Sunset over The Lake of Galilee

During our visit to Israel in 2019 we had a chance to sit on the hills of Horvat Susita (Hippus) in the Golan Heights region, as we waited for the sun to set. The Sea of Galilee has been a silent witness to the miracles of Jesus over many centuries and this view will forever be etched into our minds as we await the return of our Lord.

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Volume 84, Number 3 / March, 2021



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial — Oh, That I Had Wings Like a Dove!	104
Life Application — Thoughts on the #MeToo Movement, <i>Carol Link</i>	107
— A Case Study, <i>Peter Wilson</i>	113
Consolation and Exhortation — Job, <i>Matt Bennett</i>	116
History — 150 Years Ago, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	124
Exposition — Avoiding Bias (2), <i>Richard Morgan</i>	130
— Everyone Did That Which Was Right in His Own Eyes (2), <i>Neil Robin</i>	133
First Principles — True Principles and Uncertain Details, <i>Joe Hill</i>	138
Letter to the Editor — Dress, <i>Caleb Osborn</i>	145
Preaching and Teaching — El Salvador Bible School, <i>Jim and Jean Hunter</i>	146
Ecclesial News	148
Thoughts on the Way — Revelation's Exhortations, <i>George Booker</i>	150

OH, THAT I HAD WINGS LIKE A DOVE!

By Dave Jennings

THERE comes a time in many lives where the source of deep hurt may come from those we love most and have cherished. King David experienced this with his close, trusted adviser Ahithophel, whom he called, *“a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company.”* (Psa 55:13-14). Today, we can accurately diagnose the source of Ahithophel’s deceit, knowing that he was the grandfather of Bathsheba, whom David took in adultery and whose husband, Uriah, he murdered (2 Samuel 11:3 and 2 Samuel 23:24). The Biblical record exposed the deceit of Ahithophel’s subsequent words to David: *“the words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”* (v. 21). The betrayal by Ahithophel, to

a lesser man than David, would have probably shaken the faith of the King of Israel.

There is little pain that strikes deeper than being hurt by those we count as the most important people in our lives. Some have walked alongside us in the Truth, laboring together with us for years. When this breach occurs, and thankfully it is rare, it can lead us to feel exactly as David did. David’s reaction was, *“Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest.”* (v. 6). Retreat can seem like an answer. As David said, *“I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”* (v. 7-8).

However, the wilderness makes for a poor permanent residence. We may feel a brief respite from the tempest. Isolating ourselves during times of conflict is often a reaction brought

on by fear. We dread further negative interactions, so it may seem logical to find a solitary place to avoid further interchanges. But, as the Apostle John wrote, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”* (1 John 4:18). The wilderness is not where we discover and practice love. Rather, it leads us to feelings of self-justification, which compel us to look for sympathizers to rally around us. It is not the place for the people of God to take residence.

If you have experienced such feelings, you may know your mind can be taken captive during such times with such thoughts as: “What should I say? What shouldn’t I say? Should I say anything? What can I do to fix this?” These are moments of great anxiety. They gnaw at you. They occupy your days. It can make you doubt the fundamentals of your faith. It is a terrible place to be. It is much like David described, *“My heart is sore pained within me.”* (v. 4). David said that *“fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.”* (v. 5).

So, how did David end this downward spiral? First, David called upon God. His prayers—morning, noon and evening—were filled with him crying for deliverance. He knew that if he were to be delivered, it would be because God would hear him and respond. David’s lovely words were, *“Cast thy*

burden upon the LORD, and he will sustain thee: he will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (v. 22).

Is it really this simple? Can we just assume that God will sustain us and never allow our burden to overcome us? Yes! Only when we turn our pain and conflict over to our Lord can we begin to feel almost immediate relief.

Many Bible characters were able to look back in their lives to obtain the needed evidence for trusting in God during their moment of need. When David faced Goliath, he did so confidently because God had already provided him His protection in victories over the lion and the bear. During the last 17 years of his life, the patriarch Jacob concluded it was *“God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil”* (Gen 48:15-16). When we feel exposed or vulnerable, it is always important for us to apply this lesson. Israel failed when they *“forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.”* (Psa 78:11). When we pause to look back at how God has always been faithful to us when we trusted in Him, it allows us to experience the peace we thought could only be obtained in the wilderness.

The Lord Jesus encourages us to, *“Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* (Matt 11:29 NLT). Humility and gentleness—that is what the Lord

Many Bible characters were able to look back in their lives to obtain the needed evidence for trusting in God during their moment of need.

had and what we need when we are burdened. A broken and contrite spirit is required. If we wish for the Lord to give us rest, we need to trust in him and his yoke unequivocally.

How can we know if we are embracing humility and gentleness during times of such trials? As is the case in so many solutions for godly men and women, the answer is drawn from our Lord's example. He was abused and persecuted in ways that none of us have experienced. Yet, the Apostle Peter wrote, *"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."* (1 Pet 2:23). Jesus counted on the goodness of his Father. While he endured pain and ridicule, *"God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"* (Phil 2:9-10). Peter's counsel to the servants of God is that any solution to our trials, lies exclusively in the hands of Him who judges righteously—our God. Nothing occurs that He has not yet seen. If we are to obtain justice, it is by His elevation, not ours. So, if we find ourselves wrestling with a desire for justification and fairness—we need to surrender our self-reliance. Peter continues, *"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God*

commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet 4:19).

Of course, in most trials, there is great opportunity for learning. The chastening of our loving God is for our benefit. We ask: "What could I have done differently? Were there chances to deal with this issue before it exploded? How can I demonstrate love to my brother now? How can this experience yield in me *'the peaceable fruit of righteousness'* by the exercise of my mind?" (Heb 12:11). When we forgive those who have wronged us, it provides valuable insight into our own need for forgiveness by our God.

When we experience the pain and deep emotion of being betrayed, abused or unfairly rebuked, we know that this is not something we ever want to go through again. Best to take King Solomon's advice about how to control our response. *"Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult."* (Prov 12:16 NIV). Additionally, we must conclude that, if we are people of love, we never want to be the one to impose a similar situation on our brother. Let us love one another, prefer one another and do so through lowliness of mind. For *"we have the mind of Christ."* (1 Cor 2:16).

Dave Jennings



#MeToo



LIFE APPLICATION

THOUGHTS ON THE #MeToo MOVEMENT AND SEXUAL ABUSE

By Carol Link

THE #MeToo movement was launched in 2006 by Tarana Burke, with the goal of offering “empowerment through empathy”¹ to women of color who had experienced sexual violence. What victims of abuse needed, she concluded, was to understand that they are “not at fault... not alone.”² Whereas silence, brought on by shame or fear of retaliation, was the universal default, saying “Me too” would become the act of courage that could lead to recovery.

God’s word is not silent about sexual harassment, abuse and violence. Alongside beautiful vignettes of human relationships, the Bible describes relationships marred by shame and injury. As Solomon observed, “*there is nothing new under the sun*” (Eccl 1:9)³—nothing new, good or evil. The Bible often describes life’s circumstances in stark reality without comment. The challenge for us is to search out God’s unchanging view and to help others in

need when we see opportunities to love our neighbors as ourselves: *"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter."* (Prov 25:2).

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

Discussion of issues raised by the #MeToo movement among brothers and sisters can be unsettling. One reason is we might seem to be supporting a secular movement, some of whose ideas run counter to basic Bible teachings. There are aspects of the movement not representative of our community, and many of us have no experience of sexual abuse or dealing with it. However, because some of us have experienced sexual abuse, and we preach to people who may have experienced abuse, our best strategy is to be informed and equipped to help others.

The fact is sexual violence is "a common and serious public health problem affecting millions globally."⁴ It is not bound by race, socioeconomic status, nationality, age or religion. Sadly, it exists within the household of faith, so disparaging or being dismissive of the movement and missing the message would be a mistake. Missing the message would be to overlook a subject the Word of God directly addresses. When Paul warned in 2 Timothy 3:2-5 that in the last days people would be *"abusive... without self-control... Swollen with conceit... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"* (ESV), he was not excluding the possibility of this type of immoral behavior among believers. In fact, his warning may well have been directed within the body, not toward the world in general. We are trained to think the best of others. With

this frame of mind and the high ideals of discipleship, it is difficult to imagine a follower of Christ harming another person. True fellowship is built on trust, so to harm someone is not only evil, but an abuse of this fundamental trust, a blindsiding of our loyalty. It would, of course, be a mistake to jettison trust by assuming the worst of others. Instead, what's needed is to find a practical balance and to develop our abilities in learning to discern and to be *"wise as serpents and harmless as doves."* (Matt 10:16). This need for balance is no new thing; on the contrary, the New Testament offers much guidance. For example, the Apostle Paul says to speak evil of no one, but almost in the same breath instructs us to have nothing to do with a divisive and *"warped"* person. (Titus 3:2, 10-11 NIV). Balance means honest appraisal while assuming the best but also being prepared to deal with any eventuality.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE?

JOSEPH. The record of sexual trauma in the Bible is largely confined to the experiences of women. The case of Joseph is one exception and a sterling example to young men of how to deal with sexual harassment. A socially superior woman pressured Joseph for sexual relations. He resisted to the point of losing everything while remaining faithful to God. Though women and girls represent most victims, research suggests that as many as 20% of men have been sexually violated as children, with the same long-term consequences as women.⁵ **Men**, like women, can be profoundly harmed.

TAMAR. 2 Samuel 13 describes how

King David's daughter Tamar was raped by her half-brother Amnon. She was the daughter of King David and sister of Absalom. Absalom was second in line to David's throne behind Amnon. Tamar was beautiful, and innocent, and became the object of Amnon's lust. He is described in the NIV as "*tormented*" by lust, distracted to the point of illness. This illness, at the suggestion of an unscrupulous friend, was used to isolate Tamar for advantage.

Take note of the deceit: the first step was to deceive the victim; the second was to deceive the father. "*So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill,*" and David was tricked into sending Tamar to fix a meal for him. (vv. 5-7). Step by step Tamar was isolated until she was utterly alone with her rapist. His words must have shocked and confused her, "*Come, lie with me, my sister.*" (v. 11). Her response was an unequivocal "*No!*" She pleaded with him, saying "*Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame?*" (vv. 12-13 NKJV). Her pleas were ignored: "*He would not listen to her, and being stronger... he violated her and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her.*" (vv. 14-15 ESV). He called a servant and had her cast out into the street, and the door locked behind her. (v. 17).

Plunged into anguish, Tamar tore her virgin's robe. When her brother Absalom found her distraught, he inquired: "*Has Amnon your brother been with you?*" (v. 20). Rather than caring for and assisting Tamar, he saw the opening for political advancement. While Absalom schemed, time passed. When David heard, he "*was very angry*" (v. 21) but did nothing to help

his violated daughter and nothing to punish his rapist son. This marked a significant moral lapse by David which had long-term consequences within his family and political dynasty.

Tamar's expression about shame captures what every victim of rape knows. It bears witness to the feeling of generations of sufferers: that there is no place to offload the shame. This compounds the trauma and scars as the victim is further victimized and hurt. We can only hope that Tamar found a way to recovery. Maybe she took to herself the words of Psalm 55:22, "*Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you.*" This case study is a call for all to action when they witness or become aware of such crimes.

DINAH. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob mentioned in the Biblical record, lived long before Tamar, David's daughter. Her story is complicated in two ways. First, whereas Tamar was innocent and unsuspecting, Dinah may have acted unwisely in wandering away from her family and falling into bad company. (Gen 34:1-2).⁶ If Dinah were wayward, maybe even consenting to Shechem's advances, Genesis 34 might not be an account of rape. Second, Dinah was afterward loved by the one who violated her, whereas Tamar was hated. However, it should be noted that many offenders "love" their victims; emotion never justifies sinful behavior nor mitigates its consequences.

However, the same Hebrew word "took" (*lāqah*) is used for the experiences of both Dinah and Tamar. It is variously translated "defiled," "abused," "forced" or "violated." Both accounts use jarring narrative to describe the assailants'

behavior. Genesis 34:2 says that he “saw her [Dinah] and took her and lay with her and abused her.” These words are echoed in 2 Samuel 13:14, strongly suggesting that what happened to Tamar happened also to Dinah. Even if Dinah chose bad company, the crime of rape should not be expunged or minimized.

The strong language used to describe Shechem’s behavior suggests a need for re-evaluation of Dinah’s culpability. A symmetry exists in the Hebrew of Genesis 34:1 which describes her as Jacob’s daughter going out among the daughters of the land, suggesting that she was an immigrant’s daughter, an outsider, not a native daughter. This may have made her “a ready target for rape.”⁷ It may be that the circumstances of her life, rather than poor moral judgment, brought her into harm’s way.

However, blame is assigned in Genesis 34:1-2. The next 29 verses elaborately describe the anger of the brothers, the torment and humiliation of the father,

*The inspired
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her voice was
silent.*

the imposition of justice—but not once the words or state of Dinah! Though we are told that Shechem afterward loved her, Dinah’s feelings for him are not recorded. She is given no agency in

the account. Her father Jacob, learned that she was raped but did nothing (as far as is recorded). Her brothers’ revenge eclipsed her trauma (at least in part). She was kept in the house of Shechem, but we are not told whether this was against her will (Gen 34:26).

We are not told what she was thinking. The inspired Word of God highlights her predicament: her voice was silent.

HOW DO THESE BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS PARALLEL THE EXPERIENCE OF VICTIMS TODAY?

Dinah and Tamar probably both felt at fault and alone, just as victims of sexual abuse feel today. Should it be a surprise that silence is a theme in the Biblical accounts of rape, or does it confirm what is now more fully understood as a common human response? When abuse is exposed in the ecclesia, the victim may be forgotten unless brothers and sisters are deliberate and sensitive.

Just as it is difficult to imagine that a follower of Christ today could harm another person, it is difficult to imagine this of a son of David. Forensic studies of sexually predatory behavior find a parallel in 2 Samuel 13. These studies show how internal stops are blocked, allowing wrong thinking to proceed.⁸

An example might be, “*Love does no wrong to a neighbor.*” (Rom 13:10). A believer would have to repress this truth to cause harm. In Amnon’s case, the suggestions of his unprincipled friend seared his conscience. Today the degrading influences of pornography, sexually aggressive music and bad company all work in the same way to give rein to the carnal mind.

There are external factors too which must be dislodged to gain access to a victim. An example of this is the protection of parents.⁹ Deceiving David gave the offender of 2 Samuel 13 full access. Child sexual offenders do this skillfully so that guileless parents are blindsided. The family becomes a secondary casualty. Jesus’ words are

sobering, “*whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*” (Matt 18:6 ESV).

The question of culpability raised in the case of Dinah can also obscure the trauma experienced in cases of rape today. Not only does the victim fall into a pattern of self-blame but society too can lean toward assuming the offense was brought on in some way by the victim. One Harvard Law School organization described it this way:

“Victim-blaming occurs when it is assumed that an individual did something to provoke the violence by actions, words or dress¹⁰... [causing] their own misfortune... Victim-blaming is a major reason that survivors of sexual and domestic violence do not report their assaults. Many survivors are already grappling with feelings of guilt and shame for what has happened.”¹¹

The Biblical accounts are a window into the stark reality of how others react to sexual crimes. Jacob and David were good men who nevertheless responded weakly to crimes committed by others under their watch within their own families. Both men failed in not dealing with the sexual violence in their families. Ecclesial elders need to act decisively with facts on hand and Biblical perspectives. “*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.*” (Eccl 8:11).

*The fabric of faith
is strengthened
when ecclesias
believe
victims and
help them.*

RUTH, A STUDY IN PREVENTION

Ruth was Naomi’s only consolation when she undertook the 1,800-mile trip back to Israel. The times during the Judges were dangerous; “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” (Judg 21:25). The Law of Moses allowed the poor to glean, so Ruth went into the fields. Boaz, a wealthy landowner, heard that Ruth had come to shelter under the wings of Yahweh, the God of Israel (Ruth 2:12). When the foreman told Boaz, “*She is the Moabitess*” he may have hinted at Ruth’s compromised status as a foreigner (Ruth 2:6 ESV). Just being a young woman in the field could have “subjected [Ruth] to the sexual advances of farmhands.”¹² Maybe Ruth’s experience was not dissimilar to that of Dinah’s when she was with the daughters of the land. Threats exist today, especially for poor, immigrant women who are disproportionately subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace.¹³

What sets Boaz apart in the Biblical record is his immediate focus and determination to protect Ruth. He told her to stay close to his group of young

women, suggesting that the protection of women was already his practice. He openly charged the workers “*not to touch*” her (Ruth 2:9). He was a man of influence who used his power to empower others. This contrasts sharply with recent high-profile cases of powerful men who used their power to extract favors, force non-disclosure agreements and threaten retaliation. Power imbalance is harmful for many reasons, but for one, it leads the victim into further isolation and silence because of fear.

The case of Boaz illustrates the best practice in preventing sexual abuse within a community. It happens when influential people take steps to protect others. Hierarchies of power should not exist among Christ’s brethren (Matt 23:8), but they do. It’s unnecessary and wrong to put brothers and sisters on pedestals. This is an unhealthy practice generally, and it is not irrelevant to the topic of sexual abuse.

SUMMARY

Dinah and Tamar’s experience of trauma, on the one hand, and Ruth’s experience of protection on the

other, are among those narrated in the Bible that give insight into God’s view. Dangers existed for them, and their experiences underscore the vulnerability of women and girls throughout history.

Of course, talking about sexual abuse is unsettling, especially for those who have no experience and could not imagine the problem in their family or ecclesia. Courage goes beyond calling out bad behavior by acting to prevent it. It happened to two prominent families in Israel, so we would be naive to think that it does not happen to Christadelphian families today. The fabric of faith is strengthened when ecclesias believe victims and help them. Just as the #MeToo movement has raised awareness, our best strategy is being well-informed and focusing on prevention. Thankfully, the Word of God enlightens us on even the most challenging topics.

*Carol Link,
(Baltimore, MD)*

1 <https://metoomvmt.org/get-to-know-us/tarana-burke-founder>

2 <https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/metoo-it-s-not-your-fault-start-healing>

3 All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

4 https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf, p. 174

5 Shanta R Dube et al, “Long-term consequences of childhood sexual abuse by gender of victim” American Journal of Preventative Medicine 2005 abstract. Also, <https://1in6.org/get-information/the-1-in-6-statistic/>

6 This is how the account is usually read but there is nothing in the text itself condemning her actions. Alter, Robert. The Hebrew Bible Volume 1, The Five Books of Moses, Genesis 34:2.

7 *ibid*, p. 127.

8 Murphy, Daniel G., Rasmussen, April G. Child Abuse, Child Exploitation, and Criminal Justice Responses, p. 69.

9 *ibid*.

10 The actions, words, and dress of women can affect men’s behavior but does not justify rape. Teaching the reasons and benefits of modesty within our families and ecclesias is important.

11 <https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/halt/how-to-avoid-victim-blaming/>

12 Alter, Robert. The Hebrew Bible Volume 3, Writings, p. 630.

13 <https://www.northeastern.edu/law/pdfs/academics/phrge/kominers-report.pdf>. This is a comprehensive review, Working in Fear, about sexual violence among farm workers in the United States.

A CASE STUDY:

How One Ecclesia Started a Counseling Program

By Peter Wilson

More than 20 years ago I was sitting in the back row of our hall during a business meeting, listening to a discussion about our “lost sheep.” It dawned on me that many people who leave the Truth do so because of marital problems. It’s not so much that they changed their mind about our doctrines or one specific doctrine, but because of embarrassment, a fear of being judged or the weight of dealing with the problems. I proposed in that meeting that we strengthen our ability to help these brothers and sisters by developing a relationship with a trained, licensed counselor—one with a connection to “Christian” values and beliefs.

I was given the task of fleshing out that suggestion. To start, I accessed a list of licensed “Christian Counselors” and called several with a series of questions. I wanted to know what their beliefs were on divorce. I also asked about politically correct male/female role attitudes. Christadelphians have a wide range of positions on these subjects,

so I tried to make my queries reflect the norms adopted in our ecclesia. I felt better asking them, if only to put the doctors on notice of possible areas of concern. I wasn’t looking for 100% agreement, but I wanted someone who was not antagonistic to Biblical guidance on morality in general.

I recommended one counselor to our ecclesia. This counselor subsequently attended an Arranging Brethren’s meeting, gave a short presentation and answered our questions. Our Arranging Brethren agreed to work with him. Since that time, other ecclesias in our area have also adopted our system and are using the same counselor. The result of our ecclesial involvement has been two-fold: we have carefully vetted a trusted counselor, and we have made it easy and economically accessible for our members.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

- A person (or couple) makes an appointment with the counselor. We used to have one Arranging

Brother serve as a “gatekeeper” but no longer find a need for this step.

- The counselor is assigned a code number, unique to a specific ecclesia, for billing purposes. We never know who or what the issue is. It’s anonymous, and we just get a bill. The costs have not been onerous.
- We do not limit our program to marital problems. Things that can derail attendance, such as depression and abuse of several kinds, are other situations where we want to help. See below for premarital counseling.
- The ecclesia pays a set rate per session (75%) and the patient co-pays a given amount (25%) per session for the first ten visits. While we want to make it easy and economically possible for them to seek help, we still think they should make a personal financial commitment, if possible.
- For the next ten sessions, the payment percentages flip. The ecclesia pays 25% and the patient pays 75% per session.
- After that, it’s negotiable. Depending on the situation, we are flexible about the cost and have helped outside the norm. We’ve also paid for individuals whose ecclesias do not have a program such as this when we’ve been approached.
- We do not make our involvement contingent on someone’s ability to pay. A few might be able to contribute more, but for every one of them, there are many more who can only afford the counselor’s services with our help.

- Some have taken the unspoken “permission” given by our system to seek other non-Christadelphian counselors and found and paid for them on their own. Ultimately, they must make a connection with their counselor. It is a very personal relationship.

We also developed a pre-marital counseling system. The process works as shown below.

- The counselor holds an initial session with the engaged couple, along with a Christadelphian mentor couple.
- At some point, the individuals each take a comprehensive written test to pinpoint areas that could challenge their marriage, such as identifying needs, communication styles, finances, sex expectations and how to handle conflict.
- The counselor reviews the findings with the couple, together with the assigned Christadelphian mentors, who help them make a plan to work on the challenging areas in follow-up sessions. The proactive nature of this counseling, as well as the establishment of an ongoing mentoring relationship, has worked brilliantly.
- The downside of any pre-marital system is that the engaged couple is often way down the road to tying the knot, and there is an inclination to not turn back. One can only hope the sessions instill a pattern to follow if problems later arise.
- Our ecclesia pays 100% of the cost of this counseling. We make it a condition of using our ecclesial hall for the wedding ceremony.

In the past, there were only a few wise brothers and sisters who were sought out for counseling. You might be tempted to think that if there were more learned brethren willing to take on this work, we perhaps wouldn't need a professional counselor. Some Christadelphians feel it is amiss to use counseling outside the ecclesia. Jesus was not endorsing any of the world's unethical ways when he said: *"the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."* (Luke 16:8) The idea is to be smart in the same way, but for what is right.

Consequently I believe that the professional counselor we selected has the experience, training and ethics (which we vetted) to make him better equipped to counsel. Here are my reasons for believing this.

- He has no family allegiances, something that can make it difficult for ecclesias.
- He has a first-class radar detector for deception. His experience also helps to recognize delusional thinking patterns.
- After working with Christadelphians for many years, he understands our uniqueness.
- Sadly, almost everything in the world is also in the brotherhood—it presents some very ugly things the normal Bible student might not feel competent to handle. The counselor is better prepared to address these.

The bottom line is that our contracted counselor has helped a lot of people. He

has maintained confidentiality, without exception. Confidentiality is one of the foundational principles when dealing with sensitive issues. We are told *"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."* (Prov 11:13). Our contracted counselor can be trusted and helps prevent sensitive matters from becoming subjects of gossip. This confidentiality aspect has one drawback, however. There is limited opportunity for the ecclesial community to circle the wagons around a wounded member and be a loving support group.

FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS

Since its inception, we have never regretted this program. I hope this case study will serve as a model for other ecclesias to create their own counseling programs. I encourage you to modify it as you see fit and set it up before you ever need it. It's a proactive approach to "feeding the flock."

Peter Wilson,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)



JOB

By Matt Bennett

NO matter how many times I read the Book of Job, and as much as I might understand it on an intellectual level, there's something about it that fundamentally bothers me. How could God treat someone who has lived as faithfully as a person could possibly live, like He does? It doesn't seem fair.

The Book of Job explores the erroneous theological premises of Job's friends, namely, that righteousness begets tangible blessings and sinfulness begets tangible hardship. Sure, it exposes Job's pride and his misunderstanding of how righteousness can be earned, as opposed to being imputed or granted. But ultimately, that's all very academic. Job, I believe, was a real person, like you and me. God devastated every aspect of his life. By the end of his testing, he had nothing left. Everything he had—his children, the support of his remaining family and friends, his business, his possessions—all of it was gone.

The Bible presents the story as something of a wager between God and an adversary ("Satan"). Will Job crack under pressure or not? It's not a conventional wager since the Biblical record indicates that no bets are laid. But it does seem to be a wager of principle. Also, at the end, Job's perseverance in faith, despite his suffering, is rewarded in a tangible way. God doubles the volume of material things which he had before, and all his friends come and give him money and gold rings. Isn't that contradictory, given the rebuke to his friends for their "prosperity theology"? Job just had to tweak his intellectual understanding of God, and, bingo, blessing restored?

Clearly, we understand that God specifically tests us to prove our faith. This is a pattern that's borne out through the lives of all faithful people in Scripture. We also understand that sometimes we suffer simply due to our

mortality and the state of the world under sin. Job's case was of the former type; God was specifically testing him. But why was Job tested to this extent? Was he so stubborn that testing to this extent was required to change his heart? These are honest thoughts that cross my mind while reading the Book of Job. I'd like to explore my unease about this book and present a perspective I've found compelling to better understand Job and address my unease with the story.

On Sunday mornings, we meet specifically to remember our Lord and Savior through the breaking of bread. How does this relate to the Book of Job? Consider the possibility that Job is not primarily a book about Job! Rather, I'd suggest it is primarily aimed at helping us to better understand Jesus and his trials: his life and redeeming role in God's plan. Let's explore three topics from the book through the lens of it concerning primarily Jesus Christ: first, the wager between Satan and God; second, the spiritual journey of Job; and third, the redemption of Job and his friends.

THE WAGER BETWEEN SATAN AND GOD

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none

like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil.' Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD." (Job 1:6-12).¹

At first read, this seems a bizarre situation. I understand it to be figurative, for a few reasons. First, there's no support in Scripture for the existence of a rebellious, supernatural being opposed to God. Second, God seemingly gives Satan permission to "reach out and touch" all that Job has. So, the circumstances Job faced were not perpetrated by an evil mastermind but allowed by God's authority and power. I suggest Satan is a personification of God's testing of Job. There are two narratives, in Genesis 3 and Matthew 4, both related to Jesus Christ. In both, consider the testing, the response of those being tested and the outcome of their responses, respectively. I suggest the testing is equivalent in all of them. Genesis 3 describes a response and outcome different from Job's. Matthew 4 depicts a similar response and outcome to Job's.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’” (Gen 3:1).

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (v. 6).

“Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” (v. 13).

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (v. 15).

Many of the same elements are here in Genesis 3 as in Job—the serpent personifies external testing. The test is whether Eve and Adam will remain faithful to God, as it was with Job.

Although the serpent personifies God’s testing, we know from James 1 that temptation is an internal process. We are deceived in our own minds, not by some external power. The serpent appears as an external source of testing, much like Job’s calamities came from external testing sources. But I think many would agree that, Adam and Eve—like Job—weren’t ultimately tested by some rogue evil power outside

of or beyond God’s control. Likewise, the serpent’s punishment and the enmity described in Genesis 3:15 is not a description of some enduring literal struggle between mankind and snakes as animals. Rather, the text informs us of spiritual enmity, an enduring battle of humanity against their natural propensity to sin, with the inevitable consequence of death. There are many similarities between Genesis 3 and the imagery in Job; however, there is also a major difference in the outcome. Job remained faithful to God throughout his testing in contrast to Adam and Eve who did not. The outcome of this failure? They would surely die as God had warned them in advance. The consequence of their disobedience and unfaithfulness was dire for all humanity. In contrast, the outcome of Job’s faithfulness was a doubling of many blessings.

Let’s look at a similar connection in Matthew 4 where Jesus was tempted in the wilderness:

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’... Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.” (Matt 4:1-11).

In contrast to Adam and Eve, Jesus remained faithful during his wilderness experience, and the remainder of his life.

Again, a personified tester (referred to as “the devil”) tests Jesus’ faith. Hebrews 4:15 teaches it was the same internal process that James 1:14 describes. But, in contrast to Adam and Eve, Jesus remained faithful during his wilderness experience, and the remainder of his life. Consequently, the outcome of Jesus’ faithfulness was the blessing of eternal life in the presence of his Father (Psa 16:11). We understand this triumph over sin ultimately will remove the curse wrought by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, with powerful implications for all of us. But there is a connection to Job here, as I will illustrate in the following few verses. The Apostle John, in Revelation 1, describes the blessing given to Jesus for his perseverance in faith:

“John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 1:4-6).

The “*firstborn of the dead*.” This title has many scriptural connections, but let’s stay focused on Job and consider a connection in Deuteronomy 21.

“If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved

have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.” (Deut 21:15-17).

Leaving aside the problematic practice of polygamy in Israel, the key thought contextually as relates to Job is the so-called “right of the firstborn.” Consider this in light of Job 42:

“And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.” (Job 42:10).

And if that description of Job receiving twice as much as he had before wasn’t enough, look at verse 12:

“And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.” (Job 42:12).

Each of these livestock counts are exactly doubled from the counts presented in the first chapter of Job, which suggests the whole purpose of listing the numbers—to illustrate the principle of doubling. This associates Job with the right of the firstborn and, I’d suggest, specifically with Jesus Christ.

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF JOB

First, it's clear Job doesn't fully measure up to Jesus Christ's example—he's an imperfect type, just like all the other types in the Old Testament. Job's recognition of his limitations and finiteness admittedly illustrate his imperfection (Job 42:1-6). Think about Job's final discussion with God. He finally gets to speak with God about his situation, but he still yearns for an explanation for his plight, demanding an answer from God for his suffering. This is something I think we all experience. When we suffer loss or any testing in life, we want to understand. We want there to be a specific reason. We want there to be a very specific purpose for the pain and to fully understand every little part of it. Job illustrates this human desire clearly. He got to speak one-on-one with God about it—very literally it seems. But the encounter appears to be anticlimactic. God seems to give him one of the most elaborate and profound non-answers to his quest for a specific purpose for his suffering. It's a beautiful answer, full of powerful imagery of God's sovereignty over creation, but it does not directly address Job's direct concern. Or does it? We know in hindsight from James 5:11 that Job perhaps did gain the answer he was looking for:

"Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." (Jas 5:11).

Though God's answer in Job 40-42 may seem anticlimactic, it also illustrates a very comforting and liberating

principle of trials and suffering. Consider what Job takes away from God's answer:

"Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. "Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. "Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me" I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'" (Job 42:1-6).

So, Job, who arguably suffered as much loss and pain as a person could possibly suffer under testing, is satisfied with God's response. Job's longing was to see his Redeemer—that in his flesh, he would see God (19:26). God appeared to Job in a tempest, and he is overwhelmed with the vision, reducing all his complaints to insignificance. He realizes something I suppose we all need to learn. A key component of faith is that we don't need to understand every detail about all that happens in our lives. First, we're not capable of that level of understanding; second, the reality of God's presence and creative power and plan is overwhelming; and, third, the ultimate blessing is trusting in and embracing the *"peace of God that surpasses all understanding"* (Phil 4:7) which can provide us with peace and contentment, in spite of our trials and circumstances.

John 9 provides a more practical example of this principle.

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed [be glorified] in him.’” (John 9:1-3).

Like both the patriarch Job and ourselves, the disciples desired a reason for this blind man’s suffering—“Who messed up here?” they ask. And Jesus’ answer is very similar to God’s. The purpose of all creation is to display the works of God; that’s the purpose behind absolutely everything, whether it’s in joy or in pain and suffering. In the case of this man, his suffering and subsequent healing directly led him to understand who Jesus was. He concludes in verse 33: *“If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”* I suggest this principle extends beyond the specific healing of this man.

Rather than there being some hidden reason behind every event in our lives, be it joyful or painful, perhaps the purpose of these events lies in our interpretation of them. If we interpret them in faith, we give them their

intended purpose, by bringing glory to God. If we don’t, they truly will have no purpose. And like this blind man, we don’t need to understand absolutely every detail of the how and why the events of our lives bring glory to God. His responded to the Pharisees as they continued to grill him about the details:

“Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25).

He didn’t know all the details, but it didn’t stop him from recognizing that Jesus was sent from God. This recognition provided his healing with purpose, namely, to glorify God. Not that this realization is an easy one to come to in practice, especially when we’re in the throes of loss or pain, but when we do eventually reach this point, like Job did, what an antidote to bitterness this can be.

Jesus himself illustrated this understanding, too, as we’d expect. He uses the phrase *“that God might be glorified”* to describe Lazarus’s death, as well as this blind man’s blindness. But even more so, Jesus’ entire sinless life was a glorification of God. *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father,”* he

A vital component to Job’s spiritual rebirth was that he interceded on behalf of his friends, even though their behavior had not been that of true friends...



said (John 14:9). This is exactly what Job sought—to see the Father. And through Jesus, we too have seen the Father.

THE REDEMPTION OF JOB

We've already considered one aspect of Job's redemption—the double portion he received, bringing our minds to the right of the firstborn and to Christ, the firstborn of the dead (Col 1:18). Not that Job himself died, but he experienced a spiritual death of sorts. Job was humbled and recognized his own limitations and fallibility, and therefore repented. His pride was crushed, his sin forgiven, and through repentance, he was spiritually reborn.

There are a few more details that are particularly interesting. First, Job originally had 10 children—seven sons and three daughters—all of whom died (Job 1:2). Now, as God restores the repentant Job, we might think that like his possessions, his children might be doubled as well—maybe 20 children (which would seem to put a nice bow on the doubling symbol). But no—Job is blessed with exactly 10 more children. Not just 10 children, but once again, exactly seven sons and three daughters (42:13). I suggest the exactness of this restoration may be an image of the resurrected saints at Jesus' return. Consider Job 42:15, where we are told, *“And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.”*

The inheritance is shared amongst all his children, including his daughters, which was certainly not the common practice in his day. This final blessing of his entire family—sons and daughters—foreshadows the blessings

that would be brought forth by Jesus, the Messiah, who harnessed the greatest of all blessings by overcoming sin and death.

Finally, and I believe this stands out as one of the strongest supports of Job as a type of Jesus Christ, there's one more detail in verses 8-10. God addresses Job's three friends this way:

“Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer. And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”
(Job 42:8-10).

A vital component to Job's spiritual rebirth was that he interceded on behalf of his friends, even though their behavior had not been that of true friends. This is, of course, the role of Jesus Christ that unites all of us, his intercession on our behalf.

When I read Job, I usually identify most with Job out of all the characters in the book. Perhaps you do too? In many respects, it's completely valid to identify with Job's weaknesses. We all face difficulty in navigating loss and pain. But I confess I've never seen myself in his friends—these “miserable comforters.” Until now. Thinking of Job as a type of Christ, and his intercessory

prayer on behalf of his friends, reminds me of Christ's words in John 15:14: *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."* I'm also reminded of his words to his closest friends on the night of his betrayal: *"Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matt 26:40-41).

Though I fail to keep his commands, though I fail to be his true friend, through my sincere efforts and repentance (displayed in type in the burnt offering offered by Job's friends), Jesus still intercedes on my behalf.

In conclusion, I began by describing how the Book of Job has often bothered me, that despite an academic understanding of the book, the treatment of Job in his corresponding trials just doesn't seem fair to me. However, thinking of it through the

lens of Jesus Christ, one purpose of Job's story and of his loss and pain was to bring glory to God through a living parable of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, even though the treatment of Job is indeed unjust, the Book of Job may have helped Jesus to understand and overcome the unfair treatment he received from those who persecuted and crucified him. The behavior of his friends was also unfair. In his hour of greatest need they were miserable comforters. Even Jesus looked for comforters and did not find them in his greatest hour of need (Psa 69:20). Perhaps I'm just identifying with the wrong character. I'm not Job. I'm certainly not Jesus Christ. I'm not the wronged party. Jesus Christ was, on my behalf.

Matt Bennett
(Victoria, BC)

1 All scriptural references taken from the English Standard Version.

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the Book of Job may have helped Jesus to
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150 YEARS AGO

Perspectives on the Ecclesias in North America at the Time of John Thomas's Death

By Peter Hemingray

We are pleased to welcome back Bro. Peter Hemingray, our previous Editor, for an article about the Christadelphian Community at the time of Bro. Thomas's death and a look at today.

HIS DEATH

One hundred fifty years ago, this month, on March 5, 1871, John Thomas died, one month short of his 66th birthday. It is not an anniversary this nation remembers, nor do I suspect many Christadelphians do either. But I believe we should acknowledge our indebtedness to him. John Thomas developed his understanding of the Bible through intense studies over almost four decades, from 1832 to 1869. He boldly proclaimed what he had discovered in strenuous preaching efforts, sometimes in the face of intense opposition. He left behind the nucleus of our denomination, which is now spread over the globe. Examining the ecclesial environment in North America at the time of John Thomas's death and comparing it to the ecclesial world today reveals a great deal.

SOURCES

The information we have about North America in 1871 comes mostly from

Robert Roberts' accounts of when he journeyed from England to conduct John Thomas's burial service in Jersey City, New Jersey. (It was Robert Roberts who largely compiled our beliefs and ordered our community into the structure that exists today.)

In 1871, Robert Roberts visited most of the ecclesias in North America following the burial service for John Thomas. For a period of two months, he traveled over much of the eastern half of North America, ranging from New York to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada in the North, to Adeline, near Chicago, Illinois in the West, to Virginia in the South, and back to Boston, Massachusetts in the Northeast. He visited 23 ecclesias in all. He acquired a good sense of the ecclesial situation in this country and probably saw over two-thirds of the total members. He published extensive accounts of his travels in the magazine he edited, *The Christadelphian*. This information

provides us with a good idea of the community's state in North America in 1871. Additional information about ecclesias in North America that Robert Roberts did not visit is also available from the intelligence they sent to *The Christadelphian* around the same time. Taken together, these sources provide reasonably accurate estimates of the numbers of members, and they also yield insights about the circumstances under which many ecclesias operated.

ROBERT ROBERTS' TRAVELS

Traveling mostly by train, sometimes by horse-drawn wagon and sometimes by steamer, Robert Roberts endured the heat of early summer and the vicissitudes of travel, often alone, and lectured as many as fifty occasions to audiences, varying in size from very few to many hundreds. Approximately 500 brethren and sisters heard him, as well as thousands of other interested listeners. He encountered travel problems, difficulties in some of the ecclesias and quite often received critical comments from local newspapers. He gave extensive accounts of his travels in

the pages of *The Christadelphian*, and those accounts consist of almost 55,000 words. (That is more than 25 times the length of this article!)

Many of the ecclesias Robert Roberts visited in 1871 still exist today, but others have dwindled. However, many cities and areas with few members in 1871 have multiple ecclesias today. The Christadelphians in the regions Robert Roberts visited probably number closer to 3,000 at present. It is hard to trace any baptisms directly from Robert Roberts' visit, but certainly he strengthened the community. In particular, he helped the believers realize they were more than scattered groups: they were part of a larger collection of followers of the Lord Jesus.

For many of the early visits, Robert Roberts was accompanied by Thomas Bosher, from London, England, as well as John Donaldson, of Detroit, MI. However, both men had to leave Robert Roberts in Chicago, so for about the last month Roberts made his way from ecclesia to ecclesia, mostly alone.



As can be seen in this illustration, Robert Roberts made a vast loop around the Northeast of North America. He had no intent to take such a journey until he reached New York on April 19, 1871, but after arriving, Robert Roberts realized it would be a few weeks before the burial of Bro. Thomas could occur. News of his arrival provoked numerous invitations from ecclesias around North America, and by April 23 he had laid out his itinerary. After the funeral on April 30, he set out the next day, having apparently made all the arrangements by mail or telegram. How did he manage it?!

THE ECCLESIAS

The table to the right shows the ecclesias in the order in which Robert Roberts visited them. There were about 650 members in the ecclesias he visited. With the information we have from other sources, we can assume there were around 750 Christadelphians in North America, including those living near ecclesias and in isolation, alive at the time in 1871.

Many ecclesias were in small, remote communities where some of their members were quite prominent in society. Others were in much larger population centers, where it was, of course, harder to get a hearing from the public. But many of these groups shared a common characteristic: their existence was primarily due to a single individual's efforts. In at least two of the ecclesias, a sister was the driving force. (In Saratoga Springs, NY, it was M.G. Walker and in Jeffersonville, IN it was Sallie Botorffe). Of the latter, Roberts commented, "She is a sort of modern Phoebe, in her energy and interest in all things and persons appertaining to

ECCLESIA	#
New York, NY	30
Boston, MA	2
Chelsea, MA	10
Worcester, MA	40
Saratoga Springs, NY	5
Rochester, NY	46
Seneca Falls, NY	18
Buffalo, NY	20
Hamilton, ON	20
Coburg, ON	8
Listowel, ON	50
Toronto, ON	35
Ottawa, ON	2
East Zorra, ON	20
Guelph, ON	10
Detroit, MI	8
Chicago, IL	20
Milwaukee, WI	20
Adeline, IL	20
Henderson, KY	12
Jeffersonville, IN	12
Springfield, OH	35
Philadelphia, PA	50
Baltimore, MD	30
Washington, DC	10
Norfolk, VA	40
Richmond, VA	25
Lanesville, VA	30
<i>Others:</i>	
Hayfield, PA	30
Topeka, KS	11
Ripley, WV	20
Texas	21
Near Richmond, VA	25
Various	10



the Truth.” Such backgrounds of the ecclesias Robert Roberts visited provide remarkable illustrations of what a single individual can achieve with drive, conviction and God’s blessing. For example, in Hamilton, Ontario, he learned that Robert Powell obtained 50 subscribers to *The Christadelphian* through persuasion and enthusiasm for the Truth.

Many at this time traced their origin to the preaching travels of John Thomas, but others arose from his writings. In addition, some, such as the Walkers of Saratoga, NY, moved to the location after conversion elsewhere. In addition to the Bible, the glue holding the community together was *The Christadelphian* magazine, together with John Thomas’s writings. The majority of the ecclesias were united in the faith and in harmony, but, as is true with all organizations, there were others with internal disagreements, mostly over some aspects of doctrine.

Of the ecclesias of which we have details, Philadelphia was one of the two largest and most organized. It remained so for many years and still thrives,

although its location has moved across the Delaware River to Moorestown, NJ.

Essentially, there were two types of ecclesias: those established in major cities, and those in small rural areas. Some rural ones have disappeared—for example, East Zorra, and Listowel, both in Ontario. The latter is interesting because it was the hometown of *The Marturion*, a short-lived “Christadelphian” magazine that criticized John Thomas and was therefore ostracized by Roberts.

THE MEDIATOR

As is true today, the ecclesias of 1871 recognized that there was no higher authority than the Bible. Nevertheless, Robert Roberts had considerable influence as the editor of *The Christadelphian*. Although the Christadelphians of 1871 did not use a statement of faith like we do today, *The Declaration* was widely circulated. It was published by Robert Roberts in 1867 with a first printing of 6,000 copies.

Not all the doctrinal difficulties and their causes are known, but there was controversy surrounding two topics in particular:

- Erroneous ideas about “God Manifestation”
- The impact of “Immortal Emergence” on Judgment

God Manifestation. There was conflict over the nature of Christ. He was recognized as God, “*manifested in the flesh*” and acknowledged as “*a man tempted in all points as we are.*” The controversy in 1871 was over the tendency for some to go too far in the direction of Christ’s divinity by saying

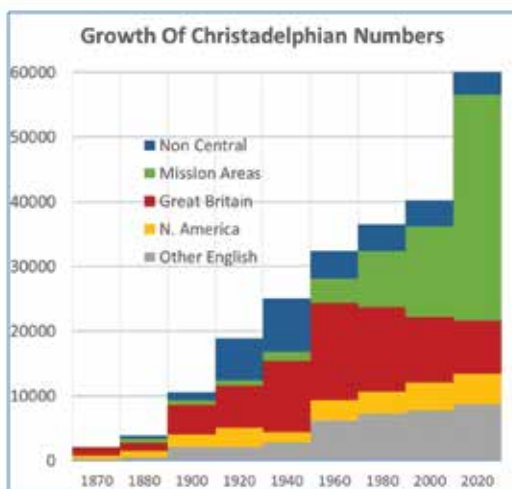
he was by nature **incapable** of sinning, not just that he did not sin. This problem troubled the ecclesias in Detroit, Adeline, Chicago, and Jeffersonville. This misconception was promoted previously by Edward Turney in England who endorsed similar ideas in what became known as “Renunciation” in 1873. Similar disputes have since arisen, often described as the belief in “Clean Flesh.”

Immortal Emergence: This topic was the subject of a dispute between John Thomas and Benjamin Wilson around 1866. Benjamin Wilson (1817-1900) held that the judgment was to assign rewards, not bestow immortality on the righteous and condemnation on the wicked. This seemingly minor point caused much dissension, particularly in Chicago, but also in Henderson, KY, Baltimore, MD and Norfolk, VA. John Thomas addressed the issue in his last statement of faith and Robert Roberts did the same in the first Birmingham Statement of Faith in 1868 and *The Declaration*. In all cases, Robert Roberts either resolved the problem or reinforced those who followed the statements of faith.

Robert Roberts sought to ensure that the ecclesias adhered to the true message of the gospel, and he certainly helped in achieving significant unification of the worldwide body. His work helped ensure that when Christadelphians immigrated to North America, as did several of my ancestors, there was often a nearby ecclesia to join.

THE LAST 150 YEARS

The story of Christadelphians in North



America is impossible to adequately cover in the space of one article. The chart alongside shows the growth of the world-wide community: yellow is North America. The progress has been slow, but steady, although the Unamended split off around 1900 and have remained separate. Despite many attempts at reconciliation, they remain the largest of the “Non-Central” grouping. The chart illustrates that the growth of the Christadelphian community currently is primarily in Africa and India. Within North America, growth was slow and steady through the 1920s, with many moving to create lightstands on the West Coast and the gospel prospering in Ontario, particularly in Toronto and the Hamilton area. Before 1900, the gospel had put down solid roots in Texas and nearby southern states, greatly aided by Thomas Williams (1847-1913). When the division over what became known as “responsibility” in 1895 occurred, Thomas Williams opposed C. C. Walker (1856-1940), who had essentially taken over the editorship of *The Christadelphian*. Many ecclesias, particularly in the South and in Ontario

followed him. Afterward, the gospel spread strongly in many areas, but in 1923 the Berean division occurred. This was primarily, on this continent, over the beliefs of Allen D. Strickler, who was accused of promoting the “Clean Flesh” doctrine, but C. C. Walker supported him. The result was a division in basically the whole of the Central community in the West Coast, the Midwest, and much of Ontario for 30 years. John Carter (1889-1962), editor of *The Christadelphian*, brokered a conference which mostly healed the rift in 1952, although a few hundred Berean Christadelphians remain separate. After this, the Central community grew quite vigorously for several years, with many new ecclesias forming in major population centers. The growth has slowed in recent years, but the United States does not appear to be following the pattern of Great Britain, which was shrinking rapidly until the recent influx of refugees.

The map below shows where the Christadelphians are in North America. The two largest clusters are around Los Angeles, with over 500, and a somewhat larger number in and around Toronto. The Detroit area has another 250 or so, and about the same numbers are in New England.

We must be grateful for Bible Schools in uniting scattered members—that and our magazines and, more recently, social media.

CONCLUSION

Much has changed in the last 150 years, but the Truth and community that John Thomas established has survived and grown. It is certainly not huge by human standards, but the lightstands he and others established are thriving across North America. We pray that these lightstands may continue to shine forth until our Lord returns.

*Peter Hemingray,
(Pittsburgh, PA)*



AVOIDING BIAS (PART 2)

By Richard Morgan

IN the last article, we considered the problem of reading God's Word with bias, using the example of using 21st century scientific understanding to interpret the Bible. How we read the Bible text, not just what it says, is an essential aspect of Bible study. Consider this example from Colossians 1:6:

"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."¹

When reading with a Trinitarian bias, it's easy to see what this verse means—Jesus, the pre-existent eternal God the Son, was the Creator of the Universe. Leaving aside the fact that we can also read the Bible with our Christadelphian bias, let's consider how we can help our Trinitarian friends remove theirs and enable both of us to grow in grace and understanding. We all can be guilty of so-called "confirmation bias." So it

is imperative for all of us to approach the Scriptures with much humility and willingness to learn something new. There is a fundamental hermeneutical question regarding a verse like Colossians 1:6. It is easy to see from the context that the apostle had Genesis 1 in mind when penning his epistle. The verse in question uses creation language, but perhaps the clearest example is in the verse before, which says Jesus *"is the image of the invisible God,"* an echo of Genesis 1:26 when man was created in God's image and likeness.

So far, the Trinitarian and Christadelphian will agree: this section in Colossians 1 is based on Genesis 1. The question, however, comes down to how the apostle uses the Old Testament. The Trinitarian interpretation suggests that Paul is reinterpreting or shedding light on the meaning of Genesis 1. He's telling us to read the chapter with new eyes—the one creating all things at the

beginning was none other than Jesus Christ. Now, every time a Trinitarian reads Genesis 1, they will see Jesus there, literally, saying things like “*let there be light.*” (Gen 1:3).


The problem with this way of reading the New Testament is that it denies its primary purpose. When taken in its overall historical context, while the New Testament was written to reveal who Jesus of Nazareth was, it was done concerning the great controversy of the first-century Jewish world: that salvation does not come by the following of law but by faith. And not only that, because it is by faith, the gospel call applied to all people, including Gentiles.

Therefore, our opposing premise to the Trinitarian reading of texts like Colossians 1:16 is this: instead of the apostle reinterpreting the Old Testament, he uses it as a type to explain

the New Creation in Christ Jesus.

Let’s think of another passage to test our theory. In Matthew 2:15, the apostle quotes Hosea 11:1 with the words, “*Out of Egypt I called my son,*” referring to Jesus leaving Egypt to return to Nazareth. If we were to apply the Trinitarian bias to Matthew’s quotation, we would have to say Matthew is reinterpreting Hosea 11 and applying it to Christ.

However, there is a crucial problem with reading the text in that way. If you read the context of Hosea 11, you will find the “*son*” referred to is Israel. Not only that but backsliding Israel, with the prophet telling us that same son “*kept sacrificing to the Baals*” (v. 2). No amount of reading that verse with any bias, let alone a Trinitarian one, will lead us to conclude that Matthew wants us to see Jesus in Hosea 11.

An open Bible is shown, lying flat. The pages are filled with text, likely from the Bible. Overlaid on the center of the image is a quote in a stylized, italicized font. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly wood.

Leaving aside the fact that we can also read the Bible with our Christadelphian bias, let’s consider how we can help our Trinitarian friends remove theirs...

Many Trinitarian scholars struggle with Matthew's use of Hosea 11. How can the apostle use a passage about idolatrous Israel about Christ? For example, Martin Pickup says of the passage in Matthew, "the most troubling case... of NT exegesis of the OT."² Other scholars say Matthew was mistaken (Beegle), manipulated the text to make it sound like Christ (Boring) or that Matthew employs a faulty Jewish hermeneutic (Longenecker).

On the other hand, Anglican scholar R. T. France realizes that what Matthew is doing is using Hosea **typologically** about Christ. He isn't saying, "look at Hosea 11, and you will see Christ!" Instead, he says, "look at the Son of God in Hosea 11, the backsliding people of Israel. Now I will show you how Christ succeeded where Israel failed."³

Based on this and many other passages, we have a rule of thumb for reading the New Testament. When Peter, for example, uses passages from Hosea and Exodus and applies them to the ecclesia in 1 Peter 2, he is not saying, "You need to reread Exodus and Hosea and realize they are talking about the church, not about Israel." If we read the New Testament like that, we are guilty of supersessionism (or replacement theology), which says that the New

*Paul uses the
Genesis creation as
a type of salvation
in the Lord Jesus
Christ and the
creation of God's
family through
his death and
resurrection.*

Testament ecclesia has replaced Israel as God's people. However, what Peter is doing is what Paul and Matthew were doing—using passages about Israel **typologically**. Hosea and Exodus are about Israel; that hasn't changed. But the New Testament brings out the lessons for the New Testament ecclesia based on what happened to God's people in the Old Testament.

One more verse can help solidify the principle. In John 3:14, we read, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*" Nobody will say the serpent Moses made, recorded in the Book of Numbers, was the pre-existent Christ. But it indeed pointed forward to him. Reading the Bible with this "as...so" principle helps clear up many otherwise tricky passages. Like that passage in Colossians 1:6, which we can summarize by saying, "as the Genesis Creation... so the New Creation." Colossians 1 is **using** Genesis 1, but it isn't **explaining** it. Instead, Paul uses the Genesis creation as a type of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and the creation of God's family through his death and resurrection.

*Richard Morgan,
(Simi Hills, CA)*

¹ All Scriptural citations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² Pickup M. New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament: *The Theological Rationale of Midrashic Exegesis*. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 51/2 (June 2008) 353–81

³ France R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Eerdmans; New International Commentary on the New Testament edition (July 27, 2007)

EVERYONE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES (PART 2)

By Neil Robin

In the previous article, we summarized the events recorded in Judges 17-21 and considered the steady moral decline of the Israelite tribes after they entered the promised land under Joshua.

In this article and the one to follow, we will look at those chapters again, this time to search for patterns or principles that might equally apply in our own lives today.

Judges 17-21 describe what one commentator calls the “Canaanization”¹ of the Israelites. Their original mandate from God had been to drive the Canaanites out of the promised land (e.g., Deut 7:1-6). Sadly, the concluding chapters of Judges (and their broader context) show that within perhaps as little as a generation or two after entering the land, the opposite had taken place. The Canaanites remained in many areas and, even more disastrously, many of the Israelites had begun to adopt their religious practices.

While God’s system of sending

judges on a mostly ad hoc basis was successfully keeping the Israelites from being militarily or economically overpowered by their enemies, it was doing nothing to prevent them from being slowly absorbed into the Canaanite culture.

This process of “Canaanization” was taking place in two distinct ways: religious and ethical. Judges 17 and 18 describe how Israel’s religious worship, despite having a surface veneer of true loyalty to Yahweh, had underneath become, at best, a compromise with the pagan practices of the surrounding peoples, and, at worst, little different from them at all. Judges 19 to 21 describes how Israel’s ethical principles had become at based only on what seemed right in their own eyes with little or no reference to God.

As we examine these two areas, we will see that in both cases, what started as a small, localized example of ungodliness eventually grew into something far more widespread and devastating. Chapter 17 introduces us to three

characters: Micah, his mother, and a wandering Levite (later identified in chapter 18 as Jonathan). On the surface, each of them might have appeared to their acquaintances as genuinely faithful Israelites. Micah's mother had given her son the name "Who is like Yahweh?" and when he confessed his theft and returned the silver to her, she blessed him in Yahweh's name and dedicated the returned silver to Yahweh. Micah repented of the theft and eagerly sought Yahweh's blessings by building his homemade shrine and hiring a genuine Levite as a priest. Jonathan the Levite accepted a position serving as a family priest of Yahweh.

However, those who knew their Torah and looked beyond the surface would have realized that all was not what it seemed. Micah's mother did nothing to discipline him for the theft and did not question any of his further actions regarding making an idol or setting up his shrine.

Micah only repented because he feared the curse his mother had uttered. He used less than 20% of the dedicated money to build his shrine and presumably kept the rest for himself. His construction of an idol and homemade shrine was strictly forbidden by the Torah, as was hiring a Levite to be a family priest. Only the descendants of Aaron could serve as priests and only in the temple, not in private homes. Furthermore, while Micah initially appointed Jonathan to be a "father" to him (v. 10), someone he could look to for teaching and example, the relationship apparently changed as

time went on. Jonathan became "like one of his sons" (v. 11), suggesting that the spiritual influence began to go the other way.

Jonathan is described as wandering around without any real purpose, looking for any place he could temporarily call home contrary to his God-given responsibility as a Levite to teach people God's law. His reaction to Micah should have been to correct him, urging him to destroy the idol and the shrine and worship at God's tabernacle instead.

While it's easy for us to read accounts such as this and shake our heads in amusement or disgust at how anyone could fool themselves into thinking this was true worship of Yahweh, if we honestly examine ourselves, how would we compare? No doubt, many of us look like good, sound, faithful brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus on the outside. No doubt, many of us regularly attend the meeting, participate in preaching events, join in social activities, read our Bibles, sing our hymns, say our prayers and so on.

Yet what impact is all of that having on our inner selves? Are you truly repentant of your sins—do you want to change to be like God—or are you, like Micah, just looking to avoid punishment for whatever it is you've done?

When you promise God to do something or give something, as Micah did, do you truly follow through with what you said you would do? Or does God have to "make do" with what little

He [Micah] used less than 20% of the dedicated money to build his shrine and presumably kept the rest for himself.

you have left after you've seen to your real priorities in life?

Is God the number one "ultimate" thing in your life, or do you, too, have idols? Could idols be things we rely on to the exclusion of God, or anything that you could not give up in favor of God?

Do you have a definite sense of purpose where your faith is concerned? Do you have goals you are striving toward? Or are you, like Jonathan, merely coasting through life and dealing with whatever happens to come your way?

Do you fulfill your God-given responsibility to tell people what the word of God says about what they're doing or the way they're living? Or do you find it easier to stay silent for fear of offending someone or of being seen as a troublemaker or a bigot?

Who amongst your brothers and sisters do you look to for teaching and example? Is it those with wisdom, experience and knowledge to be a "father" or a "mother" in the truth? Do you look for teachers and elders who will challenge you to step out of your comfort zone and hold you to account, or will you only accept those who will entertain you and tell you what you want to hear?

When we examine ourselves honestly, no doubt each of us will answer that set of questions in a slightly different way, depending on our various life experiences and perspectives. And yet, having considered yourself, do you still find it so easy to look at Micah and Jonathan and shake your head in amazement or disgust?

One commentary describes Jonathan as follows: "This person is shiftless. He has

no passion for God, no sense of divine calling, no burden of responsibility. He is a 'laid back' professional minister following the path of least resistance and waiting for an opportunity to open up."¹

This young Levite—quite possibly a grandson of Moses—should have been one of the leading lights of the Israelites, teaching God's way faithfully by both word and example. Instead, he reduced himself to a wandering mercenary performer of religious ritual.

The same commentary then summarizes Judges 17 with these words: "The religious establishment in Israel has been thoroughly infected with the Canaanite disease."

This is a crucial point. We can assume godlessness and apathy toward the truth creeps into our community from the outside. We may think it starts with those who might be "on the fringes," who don't quite "fit in" or whose views don't align with our community's long-held traditions.

Likewise, we may feel confident there is no need to carefully examine those "on the inside." We may feel those who adhere to long-held traditions, who are highly respected and sought-after teachers, or who have impeccable family credentials and connections are beyond reproach.

The example of this young Levite should give us cause to reconsider.

In chapter 17, we saw the problem of Canaanized religious practice, idolatry disguised as genuine worship of God, as it affected one single household. Micah's home most likely was not unique or exceptional in this regard. He

was presented merely as one example of what was going on in numerous households across the land.

In chapter 18, we see the same problem on a larger scale, that of an entire tribe. Without a king or any other kind of central authority with the power and willingness to investigate and stamp out false worship, it had spread to encompass the entire tribe of Dan.

Applying this principle to our community can be a little tricky, since we do not have a single human leader or centralized authority with the power to investigate and stamp out false teaching and practices. In New Testament times, it seems that each ecclesia had its own body of elders who exercised responsibility for leadership and teaching on a local basis. Yet they could, if necessary, be overridden by the apostles, who had authority from God to oversee the ecclesial community.

In the 21st century, we do not recognize any of our members as having that same apostolic authority. Each of our meetings has the autonomy to shepherd and discipline its members. This responsibility means that those appointed as elders and teachers should possess the required wisdom, knowledge, zeal and compassion to guide and instruct those under their care.

Eldership can, of course, be exercised incorrectly. On the one hand, it can be done too leniently or not at all, as was the case in Judges 17-21. We might end up in a position in which everyone does whatever is right in his or her own eyes.

Elders have a responsibility to lead well (1 Pet 5:1-4). Likewise, those under their care have a responsibility to listen and follow their lead (Heb 13:17). It

can be very tempting for us to say, "I answer only to God, I don't have to listen to you," when we are challenged or corrected, but we should always be prepared to examine our motivations. Would you say such things out of loyalty to God or a desire to be left alone to do what's right in your own eyes?

On the other hand, eldership can be abused and/or misused when done so in the spirit and form of domination and control (1 Pet 5:2-3), where everyone is forced to do whatever is right in the elders' eyes, rather than the eyes of God.

The irony of Judges 18 is that while Israel's divine mandate was to drive the Canaanites and their appalling practices out of the land, the tribe of Dan is shown to have become exactly like the Canaanites. This happens even while they are supposedly obeying God by driving them out of Laish.

It is an equally sad irony that in our day too, those who find themselves possessed of a zeal to drive ungodliness and false teaching out of the community can so easily find themselves blind to their own errors and shortcomings. And in some cases, they can end up doing far more damage to the faith of their brothers and sisters than was ever caused by those they sought to drive out.

Unfortunately, as human beings, we are very good at deceiving ourselves, particularly at finding ways to convince ourselves that the things right in our eyes are also right in God's eyes.

We see an example of this in Judges 18:5-6 as the Danite scouting party seeks to secure a new portion of land to call home. In Judges 1:34, we find

that they are in this position due to their failure to conquer their original tribal allotment. Instead of turning to God in humility and asking for help to overcome the Amorites, they looked for a different solution (one that was right in their own eyes), and went to seek an easier target.

How do you react when the path God has set ahead of you seems too hard, or when you have tried to walk that path but failed? Would you give up and look for an easier way? Or would you come to God in humility and ask for His help and guidance?

The Danites concluded that Laish was a far better prospect than their original allotment. The people were isolated from their Sidonian overlords and were apparently overconfident or lax in their defenses. The Danites felt they could do to Laish what they hadn't been able to do to the Amorites. Was this because it seemed an easier prospect militarily, or were they prepared to take a greater risk for a bigger and more attractive prize than the Amorite land?

We are always tempted by the path that seems easier than the one God has chosen for us or the outcome that seems more attractive in the short term. We must always remember the way to true life in the Kingdom of God is narrow and difficult (Matt 7:13-14), and what awaits us there is incomparably greater than anything we might be able to achieve by ourselves in this life (Rom 8:18-21).

The way to overcome these temptations is to ensure that God, through His

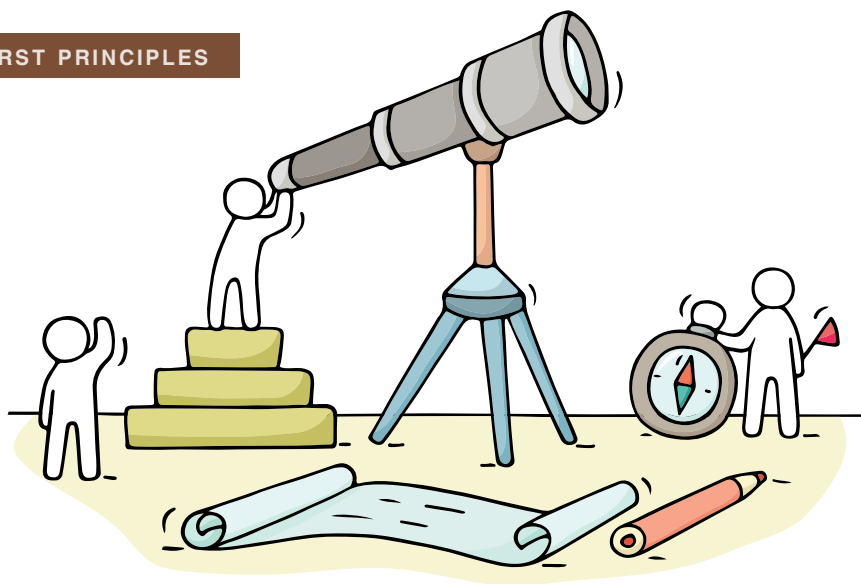
word, remains the ultimate authority in our lives. When we stop listening to God, we will inevitably start listening to some other authority, one that comes far more naturally to us as human beings.

For us, doing that which is “*right in our own eyes*” will typically mean doing whatever is normal or necessary for success and popularity in the 21st century Western world. The world may tell us to trust our feelings and follow our heart to find our own truth and the way we ought to live. The world makes us trust our natural reasoning and senses to make empirical observations and logical deductions about how society is and how we ought to shape it.

God's word makes it clear that the human heart and brain (e.g., Jer 17:9, Matt 15:19) cannot be trusted to determine what is ultimately good and right. As stated at the outset, Judges 17-21 describes how the nation of Israel, despite their promise to remain faithful to God, had become “Canaanized” to match the original inhabitants of the land. In Judges 17 and 18, we've seen some examples of how their religious outlook and practices had been corrupted and considered some of the ways the same principles can apply to us. Next time we'll look at chapters 19-21 to see how corruption in religious views and practices inevitably led to a deterioration of ethical and moral values, and again consider the implications for our own lives.

Neil Robin,
(Wardley, UK)

1 Judges, Ruth by D I Block, from the New American Commentary series. “Canaanization” -> page 473 onwards.



TRUE PRINCIPLES & UNCERTAIN DETAILS ABOUT PROPHECY

By Joe Hill

WE introduced our new First Principles section in June, 2020, and indicated that it would include four overlapping kinds of material. Since then, we've had a series of articles on "Jesus: God with us" and one on "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus." These were examples of the first two kinds: (a) "This is a faithful saying" articles that support true doctrines and (b) "Another gospel" articles that refute false doctrines. This month we start a new series on prophetic interpretations that includes some aspects of (a) and (b), but is more centered on the other two kinds: (c) "Let everyone be

persuaded in their own mind" articles that discuss "uncertain details" which are not in our statement of faith and should not be tests of fellowship and (d) "Be merciful to those who doubt" articles that encourage dialog on things we are uncertain about. If we insist that others agree with us on these secondary, more uncertain areas, then we've gone too far.

Near the end of his life, Bro. Roberts wrote an article entitled "True Principles and Uncertain Details: Or the Danger of Going Too Far in Our Demands on Fellow-Believers," published in *The Christadelphian*

magazine in May, 1898.¹ Among other things, he said,

“It is possible to go too far in our demands on fellow-believers. How far we ought to go and where to stop, is at one time or other a perplexing problem to most earnest minds. They are afraid on the one hand of compromising the truth in fellowship; and on the other, of sinning against the weaker members of the body of Christ. The only end there can be to this embarrassment is found in the discrimination between true principles and uncertain details that do not overthrow them.”

This series will separate between first principles and uncertain details for prophetic interpretations. I'll do this by going through the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, Clauses 17-30, which are about the Kingdom of God and related topics. For each group of clauses, I'll quote the truth we receive, any contrasting doctrines that we reject, and any relevant comments Bro. Roberts already wrote on the topic in his article. Then I'll make some additional comments emphasizing uncertain details about which we are free to have different opinions.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH

We all agree with the statements listed at the bottom of this page. Believing them is essential to our salvation. They are so important and so well-attested in Scripture that we make them tests of fellowship. Candidates for baptism must believe them and we insist our brothers and sisters believe them to share the emblems with us. We preach them in our public proclamation of the gospel and we teach them in our Sunday schools and first principle classes.

These principles are so fundamental to the gospel message that we find allusions to them in dozens or even hundreds of Bible passages; among others, the BASF cites two in Daniel (2:44; 7:13-14) and one in Revelation (11:15). These are among the few passages from these two books that we cite in our statement of faith. In particular, the BASF doesn't refer to Nebuchadnezzar's metallic image of a man in Daniel 2, or the beasts that came up out of the sea in Daniel 7, or the ram and the goat in Daniel 8. As much as we love our interpretations of these chapters, and as sure as we are that we have them figured out, we have

BASF² Clause #17—That the Gospel consists of “The things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.”³

BASF Clause #18—That the “Things of the Kingdom of God” are the facts testified concerning the Kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next 12 paragraphs.

BASF Clause #19—That God will set up a Kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ.”⁴

Doctrines to be Rejected # 12—That the Kingdom of God is “the church.”



Luigi Sabatelli I, *Daniel's Vision*, 1809 / National Gallery of Art, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

all willingly agreed that they are not essential. So, we should not treat them as tests of fellowship.

This assertion may challenge some of us. The crucial point is that we need to be flexible on these details. Although many of us think we know for sure the correct interpretation of the four kingdoms that precede the Kingdom of God, we may not have it right. That's OK. These specifics are not essential and acting like they are can cause serious problems.

DANIEL'S FOUR KINGDOMS

In the case of Daniel's four kingdoms, this issue of alternative interpretations may not be as hypothetical as you think. Diligent Bible students have proposed at least two legitimate interpretations. Both of them have good Scriptural support and both have unresolved issues that are difficult to explain. The surprising thing is that most Christadelphians are only familiar with one of them.

The two tables at the end of this article illustrate the two approaches, which are referred to as the Roman Scheme and the Grecian Scheme. The two interpretations differ in their identifications of the four kingdoms. The Roman Scheme interprets them to be: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome; this is the standard Christadelphian approach.⁵ The Grecian Scheme interprets the four kingdoms to be: Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece; this approach can be found in many commentaries on the book of Daniel.⁶

THE GRECIAN SCHEME WAS EARLY

Besides the internal evidence for the Grecian Scheme in Daniel and other Old Testament references (see table),

As much as we love our own personal interpretations of these chapters...we have all willingly agreed that such positions are not essential to our salvation.

there is external evidence that this interpretation was probably earlier than the Roman Scheme. For example, there are interpretative glosses in the Syriac translation Peshitta-Daniel manuscripts. These are like modern section headings in our Bibles that are intended to guide the reader to the proper identification of the kingdoms. The glosses in Daniel 7 correspond to the Grecian Scheme:

“And four great beasts arose from the sea, and were different, each from the other.

The Kingdom of the Babylonians:
The first was like a lion...

The Kingdom of the Medes: And the second beast was like a wolf*...

The Kingdom of the Persians:
After these I was seeing another beast like a leopard...

The Kingdom of the Greeks:
After these things I was seeing... the fourth beast...

And I was considering its horns (Antiochus Epiphanes) and one small horn came up from between

them... Antiochus: I was seeing this horn made war with the Holy Ones.” (Dan 7:3-8, 28, Peshitta).⁷

Bauscher adds the following footnote: “Both ‘bear’ and ‘wolf’ are identical in Aramaic. Vowel points are different for each, but the original were written without vowel points.” Then he quotes Professor Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*: “deb (wolf) was her (Media’s) name (with ref. to Jer 5:6).”

THE ROMAN SCHEME WAS NEW

In addition, the Apocryphal book of 2 Esdras, chapters 11-12, has an updated vision of Daniel’s fourth beast as “an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads” (2 Esdras 11:1 NRSV). After describing the vision, the writer shares the interpretation given to him:

“And twelve kings shall reign in it, one after another. But the second that is to reign shall hold sway for a longer time than any other one of the twelve... In the midst of the time of that kingdom great struggles shall arise, and it shall be in danger of falling; nevertheless it shall not fall then, but shall

Targum Onkelos, Leviticus 4:10-8 / Aramaic script



regain its former power... As for your seeing three heads at rest, this is the interpretation: In its last days the Most High will raise up three kings, and they shall renew many things in it, and shall rule the earth and its inhabitants more oppressively than all who were before them... As for your seeing that the large head disappeared, one of the kings shall die in his bed.” (2 Esdras 12:14-15, 18, 22-24, 26 NRSV).



Coin depicting Antiochus IV, Greek inscription reads “King Antiochus, God manifest, bearer of victory”

Theodore A. Bergren, contributor on 2 Esdras in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with The Apocrypha, Fourth Edition*, outlines how the elements of the vision relate to the Roman Empire (pp. 1703-1706):

- “11:1 – An **eagle**, symbol of the Roman Empire, used on the standards of Roman legions
- 12:14 – **Kings**, the Roman emperors
- 12:15 – The **second** king is Augustus (ruled 27 BC – 14 AD)
- 12:18 – **great struggles** for power that followed the death of Nero in 68 AD
- 12:22 – **Three heads**, the Flavian emperors (Vespasian, 69-72 AD; Titus, 79-81; and Domitian, 81-96)
- 12:26 – The **large head**, Vespasian. Vespasian did **die in his bed**.”

But the writer of 2 Esdras makes it plain that his interpretation is different than the original one in Daniel, and so implicitly endorses the Grecian Scheme by saying the Roman Scheme is new:

“He said to me, ‘This is the interpretation of this vision that

you have seen: The eagle that you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom that appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain to you or have explained it.” (2 Esdras 12:10-12 NRSV).

THE APOCALYPTIC METHOD

In the same way, the inspired New Testament writers re-apply Daniel’s allusions to Antiochus Epiphanes and (a composition of) the four kingdoms by re-interpreting them in terms of Rome’s destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Thess 2; Mark 13; Rev 13).

This is how apocalyptic literature works. D. S. Russell describes the basic apocalyptic process:

“Their [apocalyptic writers’] method was to fasten on predictions made in the past which had not been fulfilled in the literal sense of the passages concerned and to see in them hidden and symbolic meanings which they would proceed to recast and re-interpret. By thus re-interpreting and re-applying the message of prophecy to succeeding generations they showed it to be not only a ‘forth-telling’ but a ‘fore-telling’ of the word of God. For this

Although many of us think we know for sure the correct interpretation of the four kingdoms that precede the Kingdom of God, we may not have it right. That's OK.

reason apocalyptic has sometimes been described as 'unfulfilled prophecy,' and to a large extent this is true. An example of this is to be found in Jeremiah's prediction of seventy years' captivity before the final restoration (Jer 25:11; 29:10) which is interpreted by the writer of Daniel as seventy weeks of years (9:24)... Another example is the prophecy recorded in Daniel 7:23. There the fourth beast obviously represents Greece, but in 2 Esdras 12:11 it is given an entirely new interpretation and now represents Rome." (*Between the Testaments*, first paperback edition, 1968, pp. 103-104).

Similarly, H. H. Rowley explains:

"Yet some analysis is necessary to the understanding of apocalyptic. For it is essentially the re-adaptation of the ideas and aspirations of earlier days to a new situation" (*The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 1946, p. 13).

CONCLUSION

Both of these approaches to Daniel 2, 7, and 8 have some merit. Thankfully, our forefathers had the wisdom not to make any one approach mandatory to be a Christadelphian. As a result, we have the freedom to discuss these options, and others, openly and without fear. This flexibility on these details contrasts with our insistence on the first principle that God will set up His Kingdom in the earth.

Joe Hill
(Austin, Leander, TX)



¹ Available online at www.angelfire.com/bc2/Bereans/Cornerstones/Fellowship/true_principles.html

² BASF is short for the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BSAF), which summarizes the first principles of the one faith in the Bible that are essential for salvation.

³ Acts 8:12; 19:8, 10, 20; 28:30-31.

⁴ Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; Rev 11:15; Isa 32:1, 16; 2:3-4; 11:9-10.

⁵ See, for example, John Thomas, *The Exposition of Daniel*, 1868.

⁶ See, for example, William B. Nelson, *Daniel*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, Baker Books: 2012; and H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*, Wipf & Stock: republished 8/24/2006 (originally published in 1964).

⁷ Glenn David Bauscher, *The First Century Aramaic Bible in Plain English – The Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel)*, 2015, p. 187. See also, Richard A. Taylor, "The Book of Daniel in the Bible of Edessa," *Aramaic Studies* 5.2 (2007), pp. 250-251.

Roman Scheme

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Interpretation
Head of Gold	Lion		Babylon (2:38)
Chest and Arms of Silver	Bear	Ram with 2 horns	Media-Persia (8:20)
Belly and Thighs of Bronze	Leopard with four wings and four heads	Goat with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prominent horn • replaced by four prominent horns 	Greece (8:21) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First king (Alexander the great. 11:3-4) • then four kingdoms (incl. Syrian Selucides in the north, and Egyptian Ptolemies in the south, see Dan 11)
Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron & Clay	Terrifying Beast with 10 horns		Rome
	A little horn with eyes and a mouth		Western Holy Roman Empire (Rome)
		From one of the four horns, a small horn = a fierce looking king	Eastern Holy Roman Empire (Constantinople)

Grecian Scheme

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Interpretation
Head of Gold	Lion		Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar (2:38) and Belshazzar (7:1 & 8:1)
Chest and Arms of Silver	Bear	Ram, first horn	Media: Darius (5:31, 11:1, Isa 13:17-22)
Belly and Thighs of Bronze	Leopard with four wings and four heads	Ram, second, longer, later horn	Persia: Cyrus the Persian (6:28, 10:1) plus three more kings
Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron & Clay	Terrifying Beast with 10 horns	Goat with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prominent horn • replaced by four prominent horns 	Greece (8:21) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Alexander • then four kingdoms
	A little horn with eyes and a mouth	From one of the four horns, a small horn = a fierce looking king	Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dan 11:21-45; 1 Macc 1)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Brother David,

I read with interest Sis. Carmel Page's "Dress" article in the December 2020 issue of *The Tidings*. She addressed some important issues that affect many people's emotional and spiritual well-being.

I fully agree with Sis. Carmel's conclusion that our clothing choices should be governed by the relationships we have with Christ and with our brothers and sisters. As Christadelphians, our beliefs and practices about clothing, nakedness and sexuality are (or at least should be) solidly based on Biblical principles. Sis. Carmel suggested that "we may feel discomfort when people dress revealingly" because we live in "sexualized societies," but to what extent? I believe it's important to clarify that societal factors are not the root cause of the discomfort we feel about revealing clothing. God tells us precisely where that discomfort comes from—it came as a direct result of the entrance of sin into the world.

Prior to Adam and Eve's sin, Genesis 2:25 explicitly states that they were naked, and they were not ashamed. The shame and discomfort Adam and Eve felt about having their nakedness exposed did not come from society's influence—it was the involuntary response to their awareness of having sinned. The fact that God then clothed

Adam and Eve with animal skins makes it clear that He agreed with their assessment—men and women in their fallen state need a covering for their nakedness (Gen. 3:21). The shame associated with nakedness became imbedded in all Adam & Eve's posterity as part of the nature it is our misfortune to inherit.

As Sis. Carmel's stated, I agree both that we shouldn't be ashamed of having constructive, age-appropriate discussions about sexuality and that we should not set out to disparage people whose dress concerns us. Young people should be able to ask questions and learn positively about sex without shame, but they should also learn that shame is the appropriate response to expressions of sexuality that fall outside the parameters God has set up.

Ultimately, we should be teaching our young people (and reminding ourselves) that God cares about what we do with our bodies. We were made in God's image, and we belong to him by the purchase of Christ's blood. Our thankful response to the redemption we have received should be to choose to glorify God with our bodies.

Much love in Christ Jesus,

*Caleb Osborn,
(Thousand Oaks, CA)*



EL SALVADOR BIBLE SCHOOL 2020

By Jim and Jean Hunter

THE members and young people in El Salvador spend months planning the annual Bible school, the big event at the end of the year. Normally, they hold it at a rambling, rustic hotel in the mountains. But this year, as everyone knows, it was impossible to make firm plans in advance. Never have we all felt so much the truth of saying, “God willing.”

There was always the option of holding a virtual school, but the young people badly wanted to get together, even if they were just a few. By the fall, El Salvador had opened stores and businesses on the condition of observing COVID-19 protocols: masks, temperature checks, distance and lots of gel! So, in November, the brethren decided to go ahead with plans for an in-person school, and we agreed to teach if we could get

there. The hotel was open for limited numbers and, in fact, we turned out to be their first group of guests since the pandemic had begun.

In order for us to board the plane for El Salvador, we had to present a recent negative COVID-19 test result. To be extra careful, we had two tests taken. This turned out to be a godsend, because, as we were lining up for check-in, we realized the first test had the wrong date.

Usually, there are over 100 of us at the school, including visitors from other countries. That was impossible this year; besides us, the only foreign visitor was Bro. Jorge Trinidad, from Guatemala. We were all surprised and encouraged by the attendance of 69 persons, many more than expected.

The adult classes were on Ezra and



Nehemiah, a period in Bible history that isn't so well known. The young people's theme was, "Taking lessons from the young people in the Bible." Only nine of that group had registered for the school, but, in the end, we had 19!

The hotel applied strict protocols; everyone had to eat with their family group, with no changing tables. And the ecclesia insisted on social distancing, using masks and NO HUGS. That is really hard, especially when you haven't seen a good friend for a long time. Many ecclesial members hadn't been together since March, so despite the need for social distancing, they were still glad to fellowship in person.

In the past, the young people had always designed a special T-shirt with a Bible verse. In keeping with the situation, this year they made masks for everyone—two each—with the logo of a Bible in hand!

Otherwise, the usual activities were held. The young people organized afternoon games with participation from youngest to oldest. There was lots of laughter and good fun. As always, the traditional Bible quiz was a great hit: shouted answers, and, in typical Christadelphian fashion, debate about the correct answers!

The children of the Sunday school presented an evening of skits and songs, based on the parables. The evening ended with the girls in black skirts and white blouses, dancing the hora: very beautiful.

After the Sunday school prize-giving on the last afternoon, we moved on to the San Salvador hall for another couple of hours of chatting, while munching on fruit salad and doughnuts—another tradition.

Our plan was to return home right after the school, which wouldn't have allowed any time for personal visits. But we found, we didn't have all the documents we needed to re-enter the US. Thanks to a diligent son, who rummaged through our papers in Los Angeles, and made a quick UPS shipment, the problem was solved. The upside was that this gave us three more days in San Salvador for visiting. God works in mysterious ways, but it is always wonderful to experience His blessings.

Several weeks after the event, we are happy to report that no one got sick and the school was an uplifting and joyous event.

*Written by Jim and Jean Hunter,
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C Publicity*

NEWS & UPDATES

ANN ARBOR, MI

The Ann Arbor, Michigan Ecclesia has been blessed with three baptisms since the on-set of the current global pandemic. SOPHIA KEYES, the daughter of our Bro. Jared and Sis. Esther Keyes, was baptized this past March, right as the pandemic started to heat up in Michigan. STEVE TABB, who originally attended our Bible seminars, put on the saving name of Christ in May while the ecclesial hall was shut down due to state and federal guidelines. Fortunately, we were able to reopen with limited capacity a few months ago and were blessed with a third baptism on January 17, 2021, of GRANTSEN HOLBACK, a friend of the Brinkerhoff family. We look forward to walking together with our new sister and brothers.

While meeting virtually with limited physical contact has continued for some time, we pray that circumstances will improve in the coming months so that the entire ecclesia can once again meet at the hall.

It is also with sadness, but with the certain hope of the resurrection, that we report that our beloved Sis. Ellen Styles, wife of the late Bro. Don Styles, passed away July 6, 2020. She was one of the founding members of the Ann Arbor, MI Ecclesia. Her quiet loving spirit will ever be missed.

Finally, we are happy to report that we have been greatly blessed with the technology that allows us to meet with brethren and sisters near and far. In November, we held our annual Thanksgiving Gathering, where we enjoyed a weekend of fellowship and study considering, “The Sermon on the Mount”. This year’s gathering was led virtually by Bro. Tim Genders (Westville, South Africa).

Our Sunday and mid-week classes are consistently attended virtually by students from multiple countries and from throughout the USA. We have been truly blessed. As many have said in the past, when God closes one door, another is opened.

Peter Bilello

BEDFORD, NS

It is with sadness but also in the hope of the resurrection that we report the falling asleep in Christ of our beloved Bro. Ronald Hill on April 27, 2020. Born in Port Credit, ON in 1932, Ron was baptised in 1958. He moved to Halifax, NS in 1973 with his wife, Nancy, and two young boys to take up a position as a radio announcer for CBC. From that point on, Bro. Ron was a pillar of the ecclesia here, even when numbers were small. His regular attendance and eagerness to speak about his faith were an inspiration to all. We look forward to seeing our brother again at Christ's return. He is survived by his wife, Sis. Nancy, sons Garner and Bro. Todd, along with three grandchildren.

We are grateful to Bro. David Levin for his June 2019 study day, "Five Facets of Resurrection". We thank him and sister Cora for their visit and fellowship, along with the brothers and sisters who joined us from Sussex, NB. Our ecclesia alternates our study day with that of Sussex, and Lord willing, our next study day will be held in virtual format on the weekend of May 1-2, 2021. Bro. Alan Markwith (Hamilton Greenaway, ON) will be speaking on the First Epistle of John, "*These Things I Write Unto You*". Those interested in attending please contact the undersigned. Details are in the ALS Diary.

Bro. Matthew Morris transferred to our ecclesia in September 2020, from the

Handsworth Ecclesia in Birmingham, England. He is here for a three-year dentistry program. He is a welcome addition to our ecclesia and we look forward to walking with him.

Halifax, Nova Scotia has a vibrant economy, modest real estate prices and a high quality of living. We would love to hear from anyone who is considering relocating to this area for the short or longer term.

Stephen Snobelen

PITTSBURGH, PA

The Pittsburgh, PA, ecclesia will have a virtual study weekend April 17 -18 presented by Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Birmingham, Hall Green). Please contact pghecclesia@gmail.com for more information. We will send additional information when it becomes available.

Kevin Flatley

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

We rejoice with the angels that JOSIAH LAWRENCE was immersed into the saving name of our Lord on December 20, 2020. He is the son of Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Beth Lawrence. We have appreciated the support of a number of brethren and sisters who have traveled to our northern city over the last year. With the travel restrictions now in place we have enjoyed the virtual support of others from near and far.

Jonathan Lawrence

PLEASE NOTE: In order to make help make our Ecclesial News more current, and to provide better privacy, **EFFECTIVE JULY 1st, 2021** we will be moving the News to a Newsletter format. Sign up for the Newsletter TODAY so you don't miss out when the news stops in the magazine. Go to: tidings.org/ecclesial-news

Thoughts on the Way

Revelation's Exhortations

THE Book of Revelation is filled with frightening pictures, isn't it? Wild dragon-like monsters and red crocodiles, with fierce countenances, sharp claws, thrashing tails, and extra heads and horns sprouting out at odd angles. Some folks might say, "We can't make **heads or tails** of all these strange images."

We **do** know that such visions refer to the predator "beasts" among men (cp. Psa 49:12, 13), with their nations and religions and organizations. And we also know that these beastly institutions will be destroyed by Christ when he returns. But for us, here today, it is a tall order—to know exactly **what** each image and figure means, and exactly **when** and exactly **how** it will all come to pass.

For one thing, many students of prophecy have tried to predict the future based on Revelation and other prophets. Often, they have studied very diligently, been quite satisfied with their guesses, and yet have been proved wrong.

And for another thing, Jesus has said that it is not for us to know the times and seasons for the restoring of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:6-7). He has even added that we will **not** know the day or the hour when he will return.

For good measure, he has also told us that he **will** return when we do **not** expect him (Matt 24; 25; etc.).

However, if we look at Revelation from a different perspective, we may see that this extraordinary book has a simple and straightforward message. Despite disasters, sufferings, and the seeming victories of the wicked, there is a divine power that will ultimately prevail. It is pointless to scan the pages of this book for hints and clues as to the date of the second coming, when the book's real point is not the date itself, but the urgent need to set yourself right with God while there is still time!

Set yourself right with God while there is still time! That is the key. And if we were to choose the one portion of the Book of Revelation that would best help us put ourselves in order, surely it would not be its difficult images and visions, but instead its simple exhortations, scattered among the prophecies.

SET YOURSELF RIGHT WITH GOD!

"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." (Rev 1:3).

Set yourself right with God while there is still time!
That is the key.

This introductory verse raises an interesting question. Let's put it this way: A believer reads the Book of Revelation carefully and seriously, but he is overwhelmed by its imagery, so much so that he understands very little of its details. Will he lose any chance of being "blessed" because he doesn't understand **all of it**?

Based on this verse, some may say, "Yes, it means just that. You must understand it all — or you will not be blessed!"

First, we must remember that it is not our business to judge another man's servant (Rom 14:4); in fact, it is not up to us to judge anyone (Matt 7:1)!

Beyond the obvious, stated above, a further problem with such a verdict is, **we simply don't know that much—about anything!** Never mind that the Book of Revelation, which many see as the most difficult book in the whole Bible—none of us understands **everything** about **any** of the other 65 books in the Bible. It would be the height of pride and foolishness to assert that we did. However, the Bible tells us that we should continue to "*grow... in knowledge*" (2 Pet 3:18), an instruction which encompasses the whole Bible. Such a command implies that, no matter how much we learn, we will never—in this life—learn all that can be learned! This is, after all, the Mind of God which is being communicated to us!

Let us suppose that the believer understands that the Revelation is God's promise that, one day, the ugly beasts of this world will all be destroyed, and in that day the kingdoms of men will become the Kingdom of God. Let us also suppose that he or she understands

that Christ will return, and the elect will be gathered together to him, to receive immortality, and that they will reign with him over the earth for 1,000 years and beyond. Suppose he then waits faithfully for a future coming, even while he is unsure about the details and the order of coming events. Suppose he dies in this faith, not having seen or appreciated the detailed fulfillment of many steps of the divine plan but having seen its final consummation "afar off," in his mind's eye.

Suppose all these things. Then ask yourself the question: Will he lose his reward simply because he did not understand the Book of Revelation well enough? (Once more, as above, we need to recognize that we have no right whatsoever to judge others.)

The saint who feels lost in Revelation should not be proud of his ignorance, of course. But neither should he be discouraged. If only he loves his Lord and Master, and has a firm resolve to keep his commandments, even the novice in Revelation may have the most fervent desire to see him.

As I read it, this is the point of Revelation 1:3: Not "Blessed is the one who perfectly understands Revelation." Not that at all, but instead: "Blessed is the one who hears the exhortations of Revelation, takes their warnings to heart, and prepares himself or herself to meet the Lord."

The great hope of each of us is to be accepted by Christ when he comes, not to guess correctly what will happen before he arrives.

George Booker,
(Austin Leander, TX)

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION NORTH AMERICA

In September 2021 Sunday Schools in North America will be studying Stage 4 of the CSSA Sunday School program.



The notes this year start with the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ and cover the parables and miracles concluding with the death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father in heaven. The example of our Lord Jesus Christ in his life provides the children with great examples to inspire them to put their faith and trust in the living God.

The CSSA North America and the Magnify Him Together teams are working together to make textbooks and resources available to families and Sunday Schools across North America.

For a full range of items offered by CSSA North America, email Bro. Stephen and Sis. Tanya Wilton at cssabooks@yahoo.ca.

For additional Sunday School resources and support, please visit www.magnifyhimtogether.com

**To make a donation or to subscribe, visit us at
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